

**Testimony of Betsey Chadwick
Director, Middlesex County Substance Abuse Action Council
and member of the Connecticut Prevention Network**

***H.B. No. 7027 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE
THIRTIETH 2019, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR.**

*February 23 2017 Appropriations Subcommittee on Health Public Hearing
Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services, Regional Action Council Funding*

Senator Osten, Senator Formica, Representative Walker, Senator Gerratana, Senator Markley, Representative Dillon and members of the Appropriations Subcommittee,

My name is Betsey Chadwick and I am the Director of the Middlesex County Substance Abuse Prevention Council (MCSAAC), which is a member of the CT Prevention Network. I am here today to oppose the severe cuts to Regional Action Councils that will end the State's prevention infrastructure as we know it.

The Regional Action Councils, or RACs, were established by the CT Legislature in 1989. The RACs mobilize communities and provide education, training and advocacy to reduce substance abuse and promote mental health wellness. The thirteen RACs are collectively known as the Connecticut Prevention Network. In the past 27 years, CPN has procured on average, every year, over \$11 million dollars in federal, private and local funding **and** more than \$850,000 in in-kind donations. CPN also produces regional assessments of mental health and addiction services that are used in the state's application for federal funding, bringing additional millions of dollars to Connecticut. The Regional Action Councils are an excellent investment.

Today, the demands on RACs have never been heavier. The opioid crisis is affecting people from all walks of life. New and illegal opioid products are hitting the streets all the time, most recently fentanyl-based fake prescriptions, and a new opioid concoction called "glitter." Young people are especially vulnerable as some of these products are intentionally aimed at them. Through the RACs, officers from the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (New England) are able to quickly get the word out. With one keystroke, information flows from a HIDTA officer to thirteen RAC directors and from there, it's passed on to several thousand people including elected officials, school staff, medical providers, and other key providers.

I have been in my position for eight years. Like other RAC directors, I'm on a first name basis with so many leaders throughout my region. My staff work with doctors and dentists, teachers, police, prosecutors, parent groups, employee groups, business owners, and addiction treatment specialists in a collaborative attempt to contain, reduce, and especially, *prevent* the damage caused by substance abuse.

No other part of the State's prevention infrastructure can do that.

The entire statewide Regional Action Council system costs \$1.1 million dollars. The Governor's proposed budget, which removes about 80% of RAC funding, will effectively eliminate it. What then? As you will hear today, from our colleagues who provide addiction counselling services, a lack of support for *prevention* will inevitably result in a rising demand for addiction *treatment*. Connecticut can literally not afford that route.

Please restore funding to the Regional Action Councils. Thank you for your time and attention.

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